

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

1016

WASHINGTON

March 14, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: WILLIAM E. TIMMONS  
FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT *BS*  
SUBJECT: Reply to Letter from Members of  
Senate Armed Services Committee

Attached is a suggested draft reply for your use in answering the February 19 letter from Senator Strom Thurmond and eight of his colleagues on the Senate Committee on Armed Services. You can best determine whether one letter can be sent to the group or whether individual replies are preferable. As you know, the meeting the Senators are concerned about starts on March 15.

Attachments:

- Tab A -- Suggested Reply
- Tab B -- Back-up Correspondence

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_

The President appreciated your bringing his attention to your concerns about the effect of the forthcoming United Nations Security Council meeting upon the American position in the Canal Zone, as contained in the February 19 letter from you and other members of the Armed Services Committee.

Uncontrollable demonstrations directed against the Canal Zone, with a repetition of the events of January, 1964, would indeed be most unfortunate. U. S. officials have been in close consultation with representatives of the Government of Panama regarding measures to avoid such a serious deterioration in our relations with that country. The Panamanian government appears to be taking appropriate measures to prevent disturbances and to provide a hospitable and secure environment for the meeting. Our representative, Ambassador Scali, will be prepared to make a constructive contribution.

As you know, treaty negotiations were renewed with Panama in 1971, following a careful review of all aspects of the Canal issue, particularly American interest in the continued availability of an efficiently operated and secure canal serving the needs of this nation and world maritime commerce. The United States is seeking a new treaty which, while responsive to Panama's aspirations, will accord to the United States the necessary rights to operate and protect the Canal. President Nixon shares your concerns about the importance of guaranteeing the future security of required installations in the Canal Zone.

The President welcomes your views and the opportunity to consult with you in the future on Canal policy.

Sincerely,

February 27, 1973

Dear Strom:

I would like to thank you for your February 21 letter with the enclosed letter addressed to the President from you and your colleagues expressing concern about the situation relative to the security of the United States Canal Zone.

I shall be pleased to call the joint letter to the President's early attention.

With warm regards,

Sincerely,

William E. Tammone  
Assistant to the President

Honorable Strom Thurmond  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

✓ cc w/inc to Dr. Kissinger -- would you please have a substantive response from the President prepared for each Senator who signed attached letter. Also, I would appreciate receiving a copy.

WET:EF:jk

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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

T. EDWARD BRASWELL, JR., CHIEF COUNSEL AND STAFF DIRECTOR

February 19, 1973

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

As members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, we are gravely concerned with the deteriorating situation in regard to the security of the United States Canal Zone.

The forthcoming meeting of the United Nations Security Council in Panama, March 15-20, will provide a diplomatic and propaganda forum for attacks against the United States position in the Zone. Many informed observers believe that the intensive focus of such a meeting in the present climate will stimulate nationalist feelings in the Republic of Panama. The result could well be uncontrollable demonstrations directed against United States property in the Zone, with a repetition of the events of January, 1964.

The President  
 February 19, 1973  
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It is our hope that no sequence of events will overshadow the generosity of our intentions toward Panama. Nevertheless, the Panama Canal is a necessary element of our defense and economic posture. Our basic jurisdiction in the Zone has been confirmed three times in this century and cannot be altered without grave damage to the future security of our installations there.

In particular, it is our view that U.S. policy should be ordered towards two ends. In the short range, we should use our diplomatic channels to make it absolutely clear to Panama and to the other nations to be represented at the special UN session that we will not brook any encroachment upon our present operational and jurisdictional rights in the Zone, and that we stand ready to protect the American lives, property, and obligations. In the long range, we must reverse the current trend and work with Panama to help her understand that the best guarantee of her sovereignty, security, prosperity, and nationhood lies in maintaining the historic grant of sovereignty to the U.S. in the Canal Zone. We would welcome the opportunity to advise with you so that the Executive Branch and the Senate could work together to prevent further deterioration of our operating authority in the Zone.

Sincerely,

Henry F. Byrd  
 Sam J. Ennis Jr.

Arthur Danaher  
 William L. Scott

Strom Thurmond

John Tower

Clayton L. Kopp

Sam Nunn

Thomas M. Ruge

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T. EDWARD BRASWELL, JR., CHIEF COUNSEL AND STAFF DIRECTOR

## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

February 21, 1973

The Hon. Bill Timmons  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Bill:

I would deeply appreciate your seeing that  
the President personally receives the enclosed  
letter.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter,  
and with kindest regards,

Very truly,



Strom Thurmond

ST/b

Enclosure

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Honorable Strom Thurmond  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Honorable Harry F. Byrd, Jr.  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Honorable Sam J. Ervin, Jr.  
United States Senate  
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Honorable Peter H. Dominick  
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Honorable William L. Scott  
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